

data breach of personal data belonging to millions of Federal employees, they called the NCCIC and asked for its team of experts. US-CERT was deployed to play a central role in, first of all, investigating the attack but also in responding to that attack. For the next 4 months, the team worked literally around the clock at OPM to assess and to monitor Federal networks and to develop new protections against this type of intrusion that OPM had experienced.

Now, once US-CERT realized that other Federal agencies were also vulnerable to this kind of a breach, they immediately shared the indicators of the attack with network analysts across the Federal Government. This allowed other Federal agencies to scan their systems and to make sure they had not been compromised by the same hacker and to be on alert for that hacker's attack.

Because of the scale and impact of the OPM breach, which I think actually ended up affecting more than 20 million people, the US-CERT team worked long hours to make sure they could provide guidance to Federal agencies as quickly as possible so they could protect their networks from similar attacks and prevent the attacker from using the information they obtained against us. Their work not only strengthened the Office of Personnel Management's cyber security posture, it also bolstered cyber security across the entire Federal Government.

US-CERT and all the cyber warriors at the NCCIC work tirelessly every day to out-think and out-innovate our cyber enemies. The legislation we enacted last year and the bill we are working hard to send to the President this year with great bipartisan support here in the Senate and the House as well puts the Department of Homeland Security in the spotlight and entrusts them with ever-greater responsibility for years to come. We in Congress recognize the critical role US-CERT plays in strengthening our Nation's cyber security, and we must continue to support these hard-working men and women in their mission.

Mr. President, I will close by telling a story. I have told this story before, but it is a good one, and it is certainly germane to what we talked about here today.

A couple of years ago, I was listening to a radio station on my way to the train station in Delaware, and I caught NPR news right at 7 a.m. as I made my way to the train station in Wilmington. On the news that morning, they gave a report about an international survey that was taken where they asked thousands of people in different countries and here: What is it about your work that you like? What is it about your work that makes you like your job or not like your job?

Some of the people who were asked said: Well, the thing I like about my job is I like getting paid—not that they are in it for the money, but they like

getting paid. Others said they like vacations. Some people said they had health care. Others said they like the folks they work with. Other people said they like the environment—a beautiful place like this in which they work. But what most people said they liked were really two things: No. 1, they knew the work they were doing was important, and No. 2, they felt as though they were making progress. Think about that. They knew the work they were doing was important and they felt as though they were making progress.

Well, there is probably nobody in our country—at least working within the Federal Government—who does work more important than the folks at the Department of Homeland Security. The House and the Senate have worked in recent years to strengthen the ability of the Department of Homeland Security, including the US-CERT team, to be able to do their job even better.

My hope is that in years to come, as we hear these annual reports on best places to work within the Federal Government, that we are going to find that the people at the Department of Homeland Security, including NCCIC and US-CERT, will be saying more and more: I like working here because I know the work I do is important, and I feel as though we are making progress.

This Senator would just say to everyone at US-CERT, thank you for all the good you do for us. Thank you for your service to this country. And to each of you, we wish you happy holidays and Merry Christmas. We would also say, here is hoping that we will all have a more peaceful new year. I think the American people are ready for that. I know the Presiding Officer is, and so am I.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. SANDERS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2391, S. 2398, and S. 2399 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. SANDERS. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF SANDY HOOK TRAGEDY

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, next week we will mark the 3-year anniversary, for lack of a better word, of the massacre at Sandy Hook, CT. Senator BLUMENTHAL will be joining me on the floor momentarily. I wanted to come to the floor to speak to our colleagues for a few moments about what this week will mean to us in Con-

necticut and the challenge it presents to all of us.

I want to open by speaking about one of the young men who perished that day—a little first grader by the name of Daniel Barden. Daniel was a really, really special kid. I talk about him a lot when I am speaking on Sandy Hook because I have gotten to know his parents pretty well over the years, so I feel like I know Daniel pretty well. Now that I have a little 7-year-old first grader at home, too, I, frankly, feel closer than ever before to the families such as the Bardens who are still grieving.

Daniel had this sense of uncanny empathy that, now as a father of a 7-year-old, I know is, frankly, not normally visited upon children that age. Daniel just loved helping people in big and small ways; he was so preternaturally outward in his sympathy for others.

There is a story his dad likes to tell about the challenge of going to the supermarket with Daniel because when they would leave, Daniel always liked to hold the door open for his family. But then he wouldn't stop holding the door open because he wanted to hold it open for all of the rest of the people who were leaving the grocery store. So the family would get all the way to the car, and they would look back and they wouldn't have Daniel because he was still holding the door open. It was small things like that that made him such a special kid.

His father, Mark, wrote one day: "I'm always one minute farther away from my life with Daniel, and that gulf keeps getting bigger." His mother, Jackie, in the months and years following Daniel's death, developed a habit of what grief counselors call defensive mechanisms. She would sometimes pretend that Daniel was at a friend's house for a couple hours, simply in order to give herself the strength to do simple household chores like cooking dinner or returning emails. The only way she could do it is if she pretended for a small slice of time that Daniel was actually still alive.

It is hard to describe for my colleagues here today the grief that still, frankly, drowns Sandy Hook parents and the community at large. It is total, it is permanent, and it is all-consuming. But for many of those parents and many of those community members, the grief now is mixed with a combination of anger and utter bewilderment, all of it directed at us, in the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

On December 14, Adam Lanza walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School armed with a weapon that was designed for the military—designed to kill as many people as quickly as possible. He had 30-round magazines, not designed for hunting or for sport shooting but to destroy as much life as quickly as possible. Importantly, he left at home his lower round magazines. And the design of his weapons worked—to a tee. In approximately 4 minutes, he discharged

154 rounds, and he killed with ruthless efficiency: 27 people shot, 26 dead, including 20 first graders.

Here are their names: Rachel D'Avino, 29; Dawn Hochsprung, 47; Anne Marie Murphy, 52; Lauren Rousseau, 30; Mary Sherlach, 56; Victoria Leigh Soto, 27.

And the students: Charlotte Bacon, Daniel Barden, Olivia Engel, Josephine Gay, Dylan Hockley, Madeleine Hsu, Catherine Hubbard, Chase Kowalski, Jesse Lewis, Ana Marquez-Greene, James Mattioli, Grace McDonnell, Emilie Parker, Jack Pinto.

It keeps going: Noah Pozner, Caroline Previdi, Jessica Rekos, Aviella Richman, Benjamin Wheeler, and Allison Wyatt.

There are a handful of kids who aren't on that list, because there were children in Victoria Soto's classroom who were able to escape, likely—as investigators believe—when Adam Lanza had to reload his weapon to put another 30 bullets in it.

So 3 years later, as we grieve those 26, we are still having these awful, searing questions to ponder: What would have happened if Lanza didn't have an assault rifle? Would he even have had the perverse courage to walk into that school if not aided by the security of having a high powered killing machine? Would less kids have died? What if his cartridges had six or 10 bullets instead of 30? Would more kids be alive if someone had been able to stop him while he fumbled with another reload?

The facts of Sandy Hook are hard to hear over and over, but they are important because they should have educated us on ways that we could come together to make another mass shooting less likely. But we ignored Sandy Hook, and it happened again and again. This year, there have been more mass shootings than there have been days in the year: 9 in Charleston, 5 in Chattanooga, 9 again in Roseburg, 14 in San Bernardino.

As I sat at that firehouse with Senator BLUMENTHAL that afternoon in Sandy Hook, as the news rolled into those parents that the children they loved wouldn't be coming home, if someone had told me that day that we would do nothing—that our response as a Congress and as a country would be utter silence—I wouldn't have believed it—no way. But if somebody then told me that it would happen again and again and again and we still wouldn't do anything, I would have collapsed in disbelief.

I am going to tell my colleagues, that is how the families feel. Whatever we think is the best way to stop this carnage—changing our gun laws, giving more resources to law enforcement, changing our mental health system to get more help to those who are becoming unhinged and thinking about settling their real or imagined grievances with violence—do something to honor those children and adults. Do something to show there is an ounce of com-

passion as we sit here 3 years after the bloody massacre at Sandy Hook.

Our mental health system is broken. We have closed down 4,000 inpatient beds since the recession began. It is harder than ever for families to get the help they need. If you read the report on Adam Lanza, you will see a very troubled young man who was utterly failed by the behavioral health system that stood around him.

Stronger gun laws do work. They absolutely would have prevented some of those kids from dying. And the data is irrefutable. This mythology that you are safer with more guns has zero basis in fact. The data tells us that in States that have tougher gun laws, they have less gun deaths. In States that have higher rates of gun ownership, they have more gun deaths. Stronger gun laws work.

To be honest, the burden is not just on us; it is also on the administration. I have called, along with many of my colleagues, on the administration to take some steps, if Congress won't, to make sure that those who are truly gun dealers, though they might not have a brick-and-mortar store—those who are selling guns with frequency at places such as gun shows or on the Internet—have to do background checks, a recognition that they are dealers just like people who have stores in your downtown.

So my plea, 3 years after this tragedy that utterly transformed that community, is for us to recognize that there is no other country in the world that would live with this level of slaughter. There is no other nation in the world that would accept 80 people dying every day from preventable gun violence and mass shooting after mass shooting and not even try to fix it. That is what is so offensive to me, and 3 years later that is what is so hard to understand for the families whom we represent in Sandy Hook, CT.

If you don't want to believe me, I am going to close the exact same way I closed 2 years ago on the 1-year anniversary. I am kind of ashamed that I have to read this letter again because every single word of it still applies 2 years later, when the epidemic of mass shootings in this country hasn't abated but simply grown. It is from a mom whose child survived, and I will close with it.

In addition to the tragic loss of her playmates, friends, and teachers, my first grader suffers from PTSD. She was in the first room by the entrance to the school. Her teacher was able to gather the children into a tiny bathroom inside the classroom. There she stood, with 14 of her classmates and her teacher, all of them crying. You see, she heard what was happening on the other side of the wall. She heard everything. She was sure she was going to die that day and did not want to die for Christmas. Imagine what this must have been like. She struggles nightly with nightmares, difficulty falling asleep, and being afraid to go anywhere in her own home. At school she becomes withdrawn, crying daily, covering her ears when it gets too loud and waiting for this to happen again. She is 6.

And we are furious.

Furious that 26 families must suffer with grief so deep and so wide that it is unimaginable.

Furious that the innocence and safety of my children's lives has been taken.

Furious that someone had access to the type of weapon used in this massacre.

Furious that gun makers make ammunition with such high rounds and our government does nothing to stop them.

Furious that the ban on assault weapons was carelessly left to expire.

Furious that lawmakers let the gun lobbyists have so much control.

Furious that somehow, someone's right to own a gun is more important than my children's rights to life.

Furious that lawmakers are too scared to take a stand.

She writes:

I ask you to think about your choices. Look at the pictures of the 26 innocent lives taken so needlessly and wastefully, using a weapon that never should have been in the hands of civilians. Really think. Changing the laws may "inconvenience" some gun owners, but it may also save a life, perhaps a life that is dear to me or you. Are you really willing to risk it? You—

Speaking to us—

have a responsibility and obligation to act now and change the laws.

I hope and I pray that you do not fail.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Madam President.

I am honored to follow my colleague and friend Senator MURPHY in an effort that has involved both of us, our minds and our hearts, from the day we stood together on December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Sandy Hook. We have stood together and worked together with the families and community that so inspired us with their strength and courage.

If I have one overriding image and message in my mind and heart, it is those families most directly affected by the deaths of 20 beautiful children and sixth grade educators, the families in the reverberating circle of people so deeply touched, hurt, and harmed by the evil on that day, and the people who exemplified the good of that day, the first responders, the firefighters and police, who saw things no human being should ever have to witness and emerged also deeply hurt and harmed. The courage and strength of Newtown, that community, and the families will always inspire me.

I have worked on gun violence prevention for many years, a couple of decades before December 14, 2012. I was the attorney general of the State of Connecticut and a State legislator advocating for the assault weapon ban and other gun violence prevention measures. Then, as attorney general, I defended the assault weapon ban when it was challenged in court, tried the case, and we successfully argued it in the State supreme court. So I knew intellectually and abstractly why we need in this Nation and in Connecticut stronger measures to stop gun violence. The experience of that day left a

searing mark on my heart and on my conscience, so it became for me the passion and priority it is today, and I will not rest as a Member of this body and as a human being until this Nation does better to make America safer and to prevent the kind of tragedy we saw on that day.

I will never forget being at that firehouse on that afternoon, but I will also never forget that evening at St. Rose of Lima Church when the community came together to light a candle rather than curse the darkness.

I had a conversation with one of the parents who lost a child. It was either that night or in the grief-filled days thereafter, when I said to her at some point: When you are ready, I would like to talk to you about what we can do about this. She said to me: I am ready now.

That is the courage we have seen in the last 3 years from those families. It is the courage we saw this morning at an event in the Capitol. It is the courage we have seen again and again from Newtown, from all over the country, loved ones and victims of all of the places—they become kind of landmarks that we recite. There are 30,000 deaths every year from places whose names we could never recite here because it would be too long and because they are the mundane places that all of us go.

As my colleague Senator MURPHY said this morning, all of us are just one second away from becoming victims. The fact is we are all touched by gun violence and we are all harmed and hurt by it.

I will never forget that evening. I will never forget also the day on the floor of this House when the Senate failed to approve a commonsense package of gun violence prevention measures, universal background checks, banning illegal trafficking, a ban on assault weapons, the mental health initiative, and from the Gallery someone shouted down: Shame. They may have said: Shame on you. There is no record of it because we record only what happens on the floor, but on that day the most profound and eloquent comment was those three words: "Shame on you."

Shame on us in the U.S. Senate. We are complicit by our inaction. Congress is complicit by its silence. Moments of silence have their place, but silence by inaction here is complicity. It is not only the failure to act, it is also the obstruction that has been placed in the way of knowledge and research. The so-called rider—nobody outside the U.S. Capitol would talk about riders, an amendment that stops the government from doing research—literally research, fact gathering, investigation on gun violence. The cause of 30,000 deaths every year in this country cannot be researched by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In fact, we face a public health crisis in this country. If it were Ebola or influenza or polio, facing these kinds of epidemics or feared epidemics in this

country, we would react with drastic and effective measures, including quarantine, that would mobilize this Nation. The response of the Congress to the epidemic of gun violence is to bar research by the CDC and other public health authorities. The very same public health community that could help us understand and take action is gagged and straitjacketed by the U.S. Congress. Even the initial author of that amendment restricting research, former Congressman Jay Dickey, a Republican from Arkansas, said he has regrets. "I wish we had started the proper research and kept it going all the time," he said.

The Congress owes the American people more, but this promise I can make. We are not going away. We are not abandoning this effort. We will not be silenced. We will not be inactive. We are not giving up.

Twelve years it took to pass the Brady bill, after the President of the United States was almost assassinated just a few miles from here and his Press Secretary, Jim Brady, was paralyzed. It took 12 years to pass, with the support of President Reagan, and we need to be prepared for that kind of marathon.

President Reagan famously said: "Facts are stubborn things." We cannot deny the facts that drive this debate because laws do work. We come here every day with the presumption that what we do makes a difference, that the laws we pass make a difference. Gun violence prevention laws do work.

When the shooter at Sandy Hook had to change magazines, children succeeded in escaping. If he had been barred from having the assault weapon, had it been banned, unable to bring it to the site of that horrific tragedy, it might have made a difference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for just 1 minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. If the shooter in Charleston had been barred, as he should have been because he was ineligible, rather than having the opportunity to purchase weapons as a result of the 72-hour rule loophole, it might have made a difference there. We can't say for certain.

We know there is no panacea, no magic solution, but the loved ones of the families of Sandy Hook, San Bernardino, Colorado Springs, Roseburg, Roanoke, Charleston, and Lafayette have to make a difference here. Honor them with action is what we should do; inaction is complicity. We owe the American people better. We need to keep faith with its values and keep faith with America.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR TERRY BRANSTAD

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I wish to honor Iowa Governor Terry Branstad on a very historic milestone. On December 14 of this year, Governor Branstad will become the longest serving Governor in the Nation's history. He breaks a record set by Governor Clinton of New York in the early days of our country, even before the Constitution of our country was established, between the Articles of Confederation into the early years of New York as a State in the United States of America. That is a very large feather in the cap of a farm kid from the town of Leland, population 289, in Winnebago County in northern Iowa.

In many ways, a smalltown farm background prepared Terry Branstad for his success as a State house member, Lieutenant Governor, and then Governor on two separate occasions. If he finishes this term—and he will—it will add up to 24 years as Governor.

The farm crisis of the 1980s hit every farm State hard, and Iowa, at the heart of the Nation's breadbasket, suffered deeply. All of us who lived in Iowa at that time saw friends and neighbors lose their family farms and struggle with what to do next for a living. The State needed men and women with vision and ambition to pull the economy out of the doldrums. It needed people who could see the potential for farmers to add value to their operations and for Iowa to diversify its economy, which it has now done.

Of all the people out there, Terry Branstad stood out as Governor. He was at the forefront of creating a new environment to do business. He welcomed and actively encouraged innovation that would capitalize on Iowa's bedrock work ethic and our strong schools. As a result, agriculture was and continues to be a mainstream of Iowa's economy. But agriculture more than ever is an engine for many other employment sectors: renewable energy, manufacturing, crop research, insurance and financial services, and, of course, as we Iowans know, much more.

As Governor from 1983 to 1999, Terry Branstad took the helm during some of the State's worst economic turmoil in decades and steered the ship toward impressive economic growth. The unemployment rate went from 8.5 percent to a record low of 2.5 percent. The Governor could have rested on those laurels and continued to work outside of State government after he retired after those first 16 years, but he again answered the call when the State needed him again in 2010. He put the State of Iowa's interests ahead of his own and went to work for Iowans this second time, bringing his valuable leadership to the Governor's office for another round. That, in a nutshell, tells you everything you need to know about Terry Branstad.

The State of Iowa comes first for him. Iowans are well acquainted with